

"FACE OFF": Top Three, R.J. Haddy

Written by Sean Abley
Friday, 22 June 2012 09:50



R.J. Haddy, the schoolteacher from West Virginia with FANGORIA pages in his scrapbook, made it to the top three.

FANGORIA: What were you doing career-wise before FACE OFF?

R.J. HADDY: Right now, and when the audition process started, I was a classroom teacher at Capital High School in Charleston, WV. It's my alma matter, and it's a performing arts magnet school. I teach film, television, multimedia, and FX classes; pretty much keeping in the same realm as television and film arts, but not exactly.

FANG: So if that's what you were doing then, where did your training and experience in FX come from?

HADDY: That came years before that. I've been doing this for the last ten years. For the five previous to that, I worked in L.A. as an FX makeup artist. I worked for Tony Gardner at Alterian Studios, for most of that time.



FANG: At some point you made the decision to go back and teach high school.

HADDY: What happened was, I was in my mid-20s at that point, and my father had to take a forced, early retirement (due to medical issues). It was really hard on my mom, who was struggling to pay for everything. And my sister was in college, and she was going to have to

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drop out, or I was going to have to come home and help out. And I couldn't let that happen, so I came home to help out the family. I kind of got side tracked on going back, fell into this job and got comfortable here.

FANG: So now that you've been on FACE OFF, what's the plan?

HADDY: [*Laughs*] That's a good question. I don't know. The experience was amazing, but now it feels like you've been pushed out of an airplane without a parachute. What do you do next? Who knows? What would you like to do next? Well, you have some ideas. The idea was, \$100,000 to start your own FX company. That was kind of the idea, but since we didn't win... [*Laughs*] The idea is to try and open some type of facility here where I can continue to do workshops for kids in the community, and maybe even have some of my compatriots from the show come in and do some workshops for people in this area. I'd like to travel and do workshops and seminars. I'd like to travel and do some film work, but Charleston is always my home. I think the sky's the limit. I think with the exposure the show has blessed us with, I think that's up in the air. If somebody's interested in having me come out and do a workshop, all they have to do is contact me and I'd be happy to come out and do that.

I like teaching. I like broadening people's horizons, and exposing them to an art form that they otherwise wouldn't have had an opportunity to be exposed to. So that's kind of a fun thing. I haven't really gotten any solid offers to do any film work, but I'd be eager to do it. It's all about scheduling it in.

FANG: Over the past twenty years, and really over the last ten, the film industry has fled California for other states where it's cheaper to shoot movies and TV. Do you reap the benefit of that in West Virginia?

HADDY: I think that our legislature is finally deciding to wake up and smell the coffee with things like that. They want to get some of those jobs in here. And I think one of the things that was foremost in my mind while I was on FACE OFF was to show the rest of the world that there are competent people here in this region that can work on their productions, and they don't have to hire people from 5,000 miles away. I hope that happens. It would be a blessing.

FANG: When you were working on film regularly, what was the most memorable project you

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contributed to?

HADDY: I think it's kind of funny, because it translated to one of the projects we did on the show. Not coincidentally, the one I won my Spotlight Challenge with was the orchid-chameleon. We called him an "orcholeon." I was one of the production crew that helped build Poison Ivy's orchid bed in *BATMAN AND ROBIN*. I remember spending days on end putting one sequin after another, with a glue gun and a pair of tweezers, inside that thing—mind numbing. My fabrication skills I learned working for Tony really came in handy on *FACE OFF*.

FANG: Have you been in contact with him since being on the show?

HADDY: Briefly. Not since, but before. He's very gracious as always. He was always a good guy to me and treated me fairly well. Those guys were like big brothers to me. I look forward to speaking to them again soon.

FANG: Who, or what, are your influences as an artist? Going into these interviews I assumed everyone's answer would be horror-based, but I'm finding there are a lot of you that aren't necessarily die-hard horror fans.

HADDY: It's a funny thing you should say that. I think we all like horror movies, we all like a good scare. I don't know, I think horror movies lately are getting back to what a real scare is about. It doesn't have to be all gory and shock value stuff. I kind of like those newer horror movies that remember what a scare is supposed to be about. If I was to pick out a horror movie that would stand out in my mind, Kevin Yagher's stuff from the [*NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*] movies and things like that. That was one of my first recollections of what a horror movie makeup looked like.

But as far as influences are concerned, Ve [Neill] was the reason I wanted to be on the show. I've always looked up to Tim Burton's movies as an influential thing. Jim Henson, *LABYRINTH* and *DARK CRYSTAL*, his darker stuff. I think there's a darker sensibility to it, but it's still kind of lighthearted and fun. And somebody said that's why Glenn (Hetrick) doesn't like you. I don't think Glenn doesn't like me, I just think our sensibilities are different. He has a very dark sensibility. Mine are dark, but only as dark as *THE ADDAMS FAMILY*, or *Elvira* or *Scooby Doo*. That's about as dark as it I get [*Laughs*]. Tim Burton is along that same wavelength. It's kind of

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dark, but not really. BEETLEJUICE was a big deal for me when I was a kid. The makeups were really amazing to me. I used to dress up as Beetlejuice for years and years for Halloween.

The article I reference [on the show] when Ve came around for the Tim Burton challenge, that detailed all her steps for the Penguin's BATMAN RETURNS makeup, was from FANGORIA. It's still in my scrapbook at home. That's one thing that really stands out for me as an influence, her painting and her artistry.

FANG: Any other thoughts on applying for the show?

HADDY: My dad had just passed away, and I was having a really hard time dealing with that. One of the things I remember him saying was, "If it kills me, I'm going to make sure you get back to California." I think he felt like it was his fault that I came home. And I thought, "Well, maybe I'll do this for dad and see what happens..." And I'll be damned if I didn't get back to California. Maybe he was keeping his promise to me in a roundabout way.